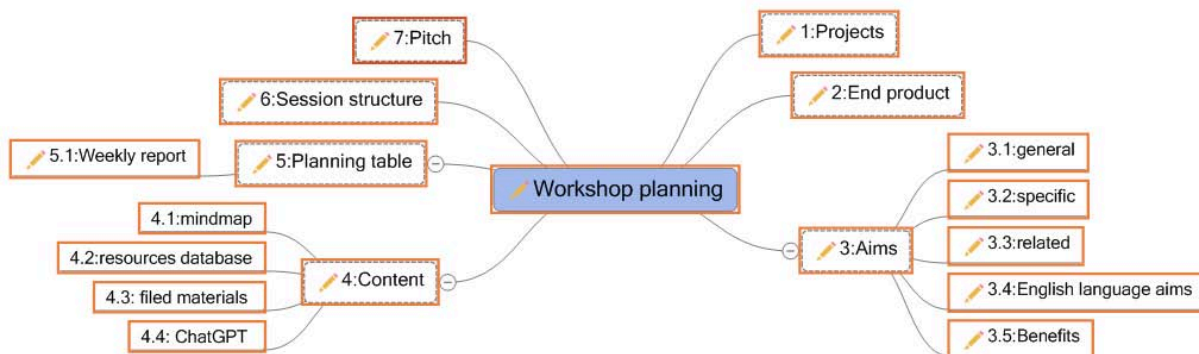


Workshop planning notes



At ECS the third teaching period for all pupils is a 90-minute workshop in things like digital photography, video filming, drama, creative writing, grammar and pronunciation, course journal, local history and cookery. The aim is to provide motivating content as a medium for developing pupils' English. The precise workshops that we run each summer depend on the particular skills, interests and experience that our teachers bring to the school. Workshops enable pupils to focus on specific interests and areas for improvement while improving their general and academic English. Pupils choose a different workshop each week.

1. Projects

A workshop is a kind of project and before you start planning it's worth bearing in mind the reasons for doing projects so that you are clear about what this kind of activity can do for your pupils. Projects:

- Provide authentic English practice: students are able to see the relevance to the real world of what they are learning.
- Provide variety for students and teachers - they get out of the classroom and experience a change of scene.
- Integrate the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening in a natural way (though the balance will vary from one workshop to another..)
- Promote learner autonomy and co-operation.
- Provide practice across the curriculum - art, history, geography, literature, biology, etc.

- Provide for pupils to use / develop different learning styles - eg, kinaesthetic, natural, interpersonal, visual-spatial, etc.

In addition projects that make use of the natural environment:

- Provide practice in academic skills such as note making, labelling, classifying, referencing, etc.
- Take place in a natural and enjoyable setting. This helps to lower emotional barriers which sometimes get in the way of effective learning.
- Develop in the students an appreciation and sensitivity towards the natural world.

2. End product

It's often easiest to start by asking yourself, 'Is there an end product that I want my students to produce?' For example, if you are running a photography workshop the end product might be a slideshow or a photography blog. The end product for a drama workshop might be a drama performance. Often the end product will suggest steps or stages that you need to work through to produce the final product.

3. Aims

Think about the aims of your workshop and these will often suggest the content that you need to cover.

general

For a photography workshop your general aim is obviously to improve the photographic skills of your pupils. The general aim for a drama workshop might be a bit more nebulous: for example to increase your pupils' appreciation of drama? The aim of a Course Journal workshop might not be as obvious as it seems, for example you might decide that your aim through the workshop is not just 'To produce a course journal' but 'To improve my pupils' English through producing a written course journal and to inform and entertain the other pupils in the school.'

specific

Specific aims for a photography workshop might be to improve your pupils' ability to take different kinds of photos, for example photos of people, action shots, macro photography, photos of landscapes, etc. Specific aims for a drama workshop might be to increase your pupils' public speaking confidence, to improve their voice projection, pronunciation, intonation, etc. Specific aims for a course journal might be to increase your pupils' appreciation of the importance of engaging their readership, producing accurate, interesting content, improving their experience of working in a team, etc.

related

It's well worth thinking about related aims that may not be immediately obvious. One way is to ask yourself, 'Why am I interested in this subject? What is it about (photography / drama etc) that really appeals to me and how can I pass this on to my pupils? For example, a related aim in photography might be to increase your pupils' appreciation and awareness of the world around them. This might lead you to choose particular content: for example you might decide that it's important to take your pupils on a photography field trip that concentrates on the natural environment, or the urban landscape, or whatever.. Related aims for a drama workshop might be

to increase your pupils' personal self-confidence. Or just to have fun! Both of these would suggest particular types of content for your workshop.

English Language aims

Our pupils are attending ECS to learn and develop their English. We have chosen to include educational workshops in our academic provision because we feel that the provision of motivating content is a key to learning. There is however a balance to be struck between content and language learning and teachers must remember this when designing workshops. For example, you may have a choice in a photography workshop between an end product which is a slideshow or a photography blog. A photography blog gives an opportunity to accompany photos with text, so you might decide that this format is more worthwhile for developing and extending your pupils' written English. Or if you decide that a slideshow is a more natural end product for your pupils' work you might think about having them provide a narration explaining how the photo was taken, how it works, why they like it, etc, hence practising and extending their speaking skills.

Once you have decided on your workshop content, go through everything to look for opportunities to practice reading, writing, listening and speaking. For example, in a photography workshop you might use a photo that a pupil has taken as a basis for a detailed description, talking about foreground, background, composition, what might be happening outside the picture, what happened just before / after the shot was taken, etc. If you feel that one or more of the skills are under-represented you might think about adapting the content of the workshop to redress the balance.

During the running of workshops remember that you are an English teacher as well as a workshop facilitator. Try to remain aware of the language your pupils are using and provide appropriate opportunities to correct, improve and extend their English. This might involve correcting pupils' English as and when they use it; or, if you don't want to break the flow of things, you might make a note of language points to return to later. You could formalise this by spending some time at the end of each workshop session going over what pupils feel they have learnt, any language points they found difficult or that you particularly noticed, etc.

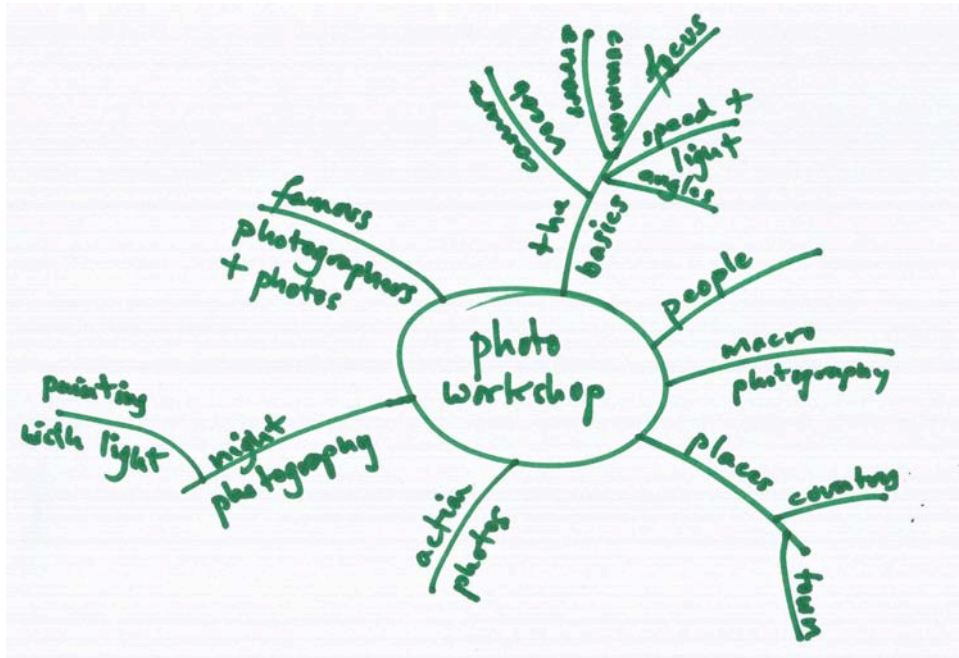
Benefits

In addition to the benefits for your pupils inherent in project work (see above) ask yourself, 'What are the benefits of this workshop to my pupils?' This will help you to 'sell' the workshop to pupils when you have to pitch it to them (see 'Pitch' below). For example, the benefits for pupils who improve their photographic skills might be better employment prospects, an enhanced ability to 'see' the world around them and lifelong pleasure from recording the places they visit and the people they meet. An awareness of these benefits might help to inform your planning: for example you might plan a photography assignment in which your pupils visit a mundane place and try to 'see' it with new eyes.

4. Content

Mindmap

Once you have thought about the aims of your workshop you may find it helpful to produce a mind map of its potential content. Mind maps are helpful in planning because they enable you to express random ideas in a relatively coherent form without having to think too much about sequence, priority and order. The structure tends to stimulate new ideas, which can be easily added to the map; and headings tend to suggest sub headings. As a result a basic structure for your workshop may emerge. Furthermore, if you forget something or wish to add new ideas at a later stage, it's easy to do so. Here is an example of a mind map for a photography workshop:



You'll see that not much thought has been given to structure here: the important thing is just to get the ideas down. Once you have your basic mind map it's worth looking to see if there is duplication or whether one branch looks particularly light or heavy with ideas. As a result you may

decide to combine or separate branches or move some of your content to different branches. For example in the photography mind map above the branch 'the basics' looks a bit heavy, whereas the 'people' branch looks a bit thin. So I might decide to use a 'people' assignment to practise some basic principles such as paying attention to background and focus and shooting from different angles. Looking at my initial mind map I might choose to use the different branches - people, places, action and night photography - to practise the basics and put in extra sessions on 'understanding your camera' and 'avoiding common errors'. The point is, even though my final workshop sessions might not exactly mirror my initial mind map, the process has usefully suggested a structure for the workshop.

The appearance of mind maps can vary from simple text mind maps like the one above to elaborate artistic creations that belong on the wall: do a google image search for mind maps and you'll see what I mean!

Resources database

The resources database at <https://countryschools.infomanaged.co.uk/> contains a growing body of support materials for workshops. If you do not have your log in details please ask us for them. After logging in, click the 'Workshops' link in the left menu bar. This will open up a table with links to each workshop. In addition, do a general search using the 'Quick search' box at the top left of the page: you may find additional teaching materials for the subject you are researching.

Filed materials

You will find files of materials from previous workshops in various states of completion on our shelves. Do not rely solely on these but do look through them for additional ideas and materials.

ChatGPT

Once you have given thought to the aims and content of your workshop, you might like to run your ideas through an AI programme like ChatGPT. An example of a prompt is: "Create a digital workshop for teenagers consisting of five ninety-minute sessions that develop their skills in

nature photography while improving their English Language skills.” Use the programme to expand on any of the generated ideas, for example: “What English terms are related to nature photography?”

5. Planning table

Once you have identified likely content, you need to think about the time you have available and how you will fit everything in. A typical ECS workshop will take place over five 90-minute sessions. It may be that you need to reduce or expand your aims to the time available. This will of course be a best guess and you should be prepared to be flexible if your pupils work more or less quickly than you anticipated. Bear in mind that at ECS you will be conducting a new workshop with a new group of pupils each week. You might decide to repeat the same workshop content each week. Or you might decide to cover a different aspect of content each week. For example, with regard to photography, you might decide to cover the basics of photography with each new group but then cover a different aspect of photography (photographing people, photographing nature, urban photography, etc) each week. Or you might decide to have different groups of pupils within the same workshop session covering different aspects of the medium. Likewise a drama workshop might include fun confidence-building activities each week but create a different performance with each group; or perhaps small groups might work on their own with your guidance to create their own performances.

When you are ready, complete the 'Workshop planning table' at the end of these notes and note down the content you wish to cover in each session. The 'aims' column will help to remind you (and your students) why you are doing things and the 'language exploitation' column will help to remind you to look for opportunities to use and exploit the content for language learning.

Weekly report

As part of your job as a workshop leader you will be required to write a weekly report on the pupils in your workshop. This need not be too onerous: look at your completed planning table and this should suggest a summary of your workshop that you can copy into each pupil's report. You then need only add a sentence or two about each pupil's participation to complete their report.

6. Session structure

When you have decided on the content of each workshop session, think about the structure of each session. For example, a photography workshop session of 90 minutes might take the following structure:

- Review the previous session and outline the content of this session: eg. taking photos of people
- Ask pupils to work in groups to research photos of people taken by famous photographers. They should choose one or two photos and be prepared to talk to the other pupils about why they chose a particular photo and how they think it works.
- 5 'tips' for taking better photos of people - either researched or teacher-led. For example consider lighting, angle of shot, background distractions, etc.
- Groups or pairs take photos of people
- Pupils edit the photos and choose one to show to the rest of the group. They should say why they chose the photo, what they like about it and why they think it is effective.
- Pupils add their photo to the photo blog with an accompany description of where they took it, why they like it, why they think it is effective, etc.
- Other pupils add their own comments to the blog.
- Review of session.

Of course you may wish to vary the structure of each session, but bear in mind that some common elements of structure (for example an introduction to explain the purpose of the session / a review at the end for pupils to tell you what they learnt) can be comforting as well as instructive.

7. Pitch

Pupils choose a different workshop to attend each full week of their stay. The procedure has historically been (with larger numbers of pupils) as follows:

- Workshop leaders attend a meeting with pupils and 'pitch' their workshop to them. This involves describing the workshop and making it sound as interesting and worthwhile as possible. Don't think that pupils are only interested in fun and games: many will choose a workshop that helps them to improve their English. So make sure you explain to pupils how the workshop will help them with this as well as providing (hopefully) motivating content. On the other hand, if you are running a workshop such as 'grammar and pronunciation' make sure you explain to pupils how it might also be fun (using IT for pronunciation, using games and songs to practise grammar, etc). For most pupils, the main attraction of a particular workshop will be its content. But when you are pitching the workshop try to think in terms of 'benefits' and not just content. For example, visiting local sites of history will not only extend pupils' awareness of English history and culture but will also give them the pleasure of doing this in other places they visit. Taking part in drama will not only be fun but will also increase pupils' self confidence when speaking in public. Taking better photos will not only provide pupils with lifelong enjoyment but might also help them to appreciate nature and perhaps enhance their employment opportunities.
- Once every workshop leader has pitched their workshop the pupils will be given a piece of paper on which they write their name and their first, second and third choice of workshop. They then fold their papers and hand them back. The papers are drawn at random out of a hat and pupils are allocated to workshops according to their choices. When a particular workshop is full the remaining pupils who have chosen it as their first choice can no longer attend it and are allocated to their second choice of workshop. This process continues until all workshops are full.
- As a result of the above, some pupils will be in their first choice of workshop, some will be in their second or third choice of workshop. Each pupil's paper is ticked to show which workshop they were allocated to. In order to keep things fair, pupils who ended up with their third choice of workshop will be given their first choice of workshop in week 2, followed by pupils who ended up with their second choice of workshop.
- There will always be some workshops that are more popular than others. Don't feel disheartened if pupils don't make your workshop their first choice. Just concentrate on making your workshop as enjoyable and worthwhile as it can be – remember, quality not quantity - and make sure you continue to look for and stress to your pupils the linguistic and wider benefits of what they are learning during your workshop.

Christopher Etchells
Updated February 2024



Education workshop planning table

Workshop title:

Workshop leader: Date:

End product			
General aims			
Specific aims			
Pupil benefits			
	Content	Aims	Language exploitation
Session 1			
Session 2			

ECS workshop planning table p 2

	Content	Aims	Language exploitation
Session 3			
Session 4			
Session 5			

Summary of workshop for week (will form the basis of your workshop report)

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